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SHOULD HARRY TRUMAN HAVE INDICTED HEUMES?

BY PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

WASHINGTON--The odds are now given as even-money that Justice will move to indict former CIA Director Richard Helms for misleading a Senate committee concerning CIA involvement in Chile.

Before the President and Mr. Bell allow this "senseless" hammer blow to fall upon the intelligence community, they might review how President Truman handled a similar matter 25 years ago.

In 1952, the CIA passed along to the FBI and State a report, picked up in Seattle, that Prof. Owen Lattimore was planning a trip to Moscow. (On July 3, 1952, Lattimore was characterized by a Senate subcommittee as a "conscious, articulate instrument of the Soviet conspiracy.") Receiving the Seattle report, the Department of State alerted customs officials to block Lattimore's departure. The matter broke into print.

The report proved inaccurate. Its source, a 32-year-old travel agent named Harry R. Jarvinen, was indicted by a federal grand jury. Two CIA agents, Miller Holland and Wayne H. Richardson, were called to testify. Both stonewalled, with Richardson refusing to testify "on orders of my superior." Along with Miller, he was sentenced to 15 days in prison for contempt.

But this was unacceptable to Harry Truman. Quietly bypassing Justice, the President issued pardons to both men. Since in the President's proclamation on Richardson's behalf, "...it has been made to appear to me that the said Wayne Richardson at the time of the aforesaid trial was an agent of the United States and acting in obedience to what he believed to be a lawful order of his official superior...."

In passing on the President's clemency petition, CIA Director George C. Marshall wrote:

(over)

"THAT YOUR CONDUCT WAS CORRECT AND HONORABLE IS RECOGNIZED BY THE PRESIDENT IN GRANTING THIS PARDON," WROTE JAMES TO AGENT RICHARDSON. "IN THE EYES OF THE LAW, YOUR RECORD IS AS IF THE INCIDENT HAD NEVER OCCURRED. IN THE EYES OF THE AGENCY, YOUR METICULOUS COMPLIANCE WITH ORDERS MADE AN ENDURING CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY."

"LEGALLY AND MORALLY NO FAULT EXISTS; AND YOUR CONSCIENCE CAN BE CLEAR THAT YOUR CONDUCT WAS HONORABLE AND IN THE BEST TRADITIONS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICE."

CLEARLY, TESTIFYING BEFORE THAT SENATE COMMITTEE, HELMS WAS CONFRONTED WITH A SERIOUS MORAL DILEMMA: SHOULD HE PROTECT AT GRAVE LEGAL RISK TO HIMSELF THE SECRETS HE WAS SWORN TO PROTECT, OR SHOULD HE SPILL THE "WHOLE TRUTH" ABOUT CIA INVOLVEMENT AND THEREBY CRIPPLE HIS AGENCY, AND PERHAPS THIS COUNTRY? THIS IS AN ISSUE TO BE DEBATED IN ETHICS COURSES IN POSTGRADUATE SEMINARS; NOT A MATTER FOR A FEDERAL INDICTMENT.

WHAT SORT OF NATION HAVE WE BECOME? HELMS, WHO HAS SERVED HIS COUNTRY HONORABLY FOR DECADES, IS FACING THIS POSSIBLE INDICTMENT, WHILE THE TURNCOAT PHILIP AGEE, WHO FINGERED DOZENS OF CIA AGENTS ABOARD, ONE OF WHOM WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ASSASSINATED, IS TOLD BY THE SAME JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HE FACES NO PROBLEM IF HE COXES HOME TO A COUNTRY WHOSE SECRETS HE BETRAYED.

INDICTING RICHARD HELMS, ALONG WITH JOHN KERRNEY OF THE FBI, WOULD FURTHER DEMORALIZE THESE ALREADY BATTERED SECURITY AGENCIES. IT WOULD NECESSITATE OPENING THE MOST SENSITIVE STRATEGIC VICTORY FOR THOSE, HERE AND ABOARD, WHO WANT THE FBI AND CIA FURTHER SMEARED, IF NOT DESTROYED.

IF CARTER ALLOWS THIS TRAVESTY TO PROCEED, IT WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT HE LACKS UTTERLY THAT SENSE OF PRIORITY WHICH TRUMAN SHARED. BUT, THEN, WHOM THE GODS DESTROY, THEY FIRST MAKE MAD.

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